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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIRKUK 000133

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SUBJECT: (SBU) NEW KURDISH BLOC ON POLITICAL GOALS, OPPOSITION TO
KDP-PUK

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CLASSIFIED BY: Jim Bigus, PRT Leader, POL, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C/NF) INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: Leaders of the recently formed 5-party Kurdish political opposition bloc said they would focus on local issues and push to reduce the domination of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). They asserted that their bloc is secular and will counter the growing political influence of Islam in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). They also hope to push the KRG to a more Kurdish nationalist stance on Article 140 and the future of Kirkuk. Post met with representatives from the following bloc parties: Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party (KDSP)(see para 11 below); Kurdistan Democratic Movement (KDM); Kurdistan Peoples' Democratic Movement (KPDM); and Kurdistan Liberation Party (KLP). The representative of the fifth opposition party, the Kurdistan Independent Labor Party, did not attend. END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

(C) "EVEN HOUSEKEEPERS MUST BE PARTY MEMBERS"

¶2. (C/NF) IPAO on July 19, 2006, met with leaders of the 5-party Kurdish opposition bloc formed on June 25, 2006. The representatives said the two main Kurdish parties have dominated the political system to such an extent that even housekeepers and servants must join the KDP or PUK to win employment. The opposition leaders said their first priority would be to force reforms of the KRG until it is a truly representative government of the people. The bloc members said they would start by pushing for a ban on the requirement of party membership for employment.

(SBU) INDEPENDENCE - "THE RIGHT OF ALL NATIONS"

¶3. (C) The representatives said their parties formed the bloc because they share the ideology that independence is "the right of all nations," believe this is a critical time in Kurdish politics, and that opposition is necessary to achieve their goals and guard against potential conflict between the two main parties. (Note: The bloc leaders claimed several of their members acted as arbiters during the civil conflict between the KDP and PUK in the mid-90's. End note.) The bloc members also do not agree with the way the KDP and PUK have distributed power and economic benefits.

(SBU) KEEP RELIGION OUT OF GOVERNMENT

¶4. (C) The bloc members all agreed that smaller secular parties can and should play a key role in protecting against the growing influence of Islam in Kurdistan. To achieve this goal, the five parties would like to focus on improving municipal services in KRG areas.

(SBU) POSITION ON KIRKUK, ARTICLE 140

¶5. (C) The leaders recalled that the Kirkuk issue was a main reason the Kurds never reached an agreement with Saddam's regime. The leaders said the issue of Kirkuk is likely to determine the relationship between the Kurds and the new government in Baghdad. The bloc members said they agreed with the importance of implementing Art. 140, but said the KDP and PUK have not seriously addressed this issue. The bloc stands for reincorporating Chamchamal, Kifri, Kalar and other Kurdish areas separated under Saddam back into Kirkuk Province.

(U) BIOGRAPHIC NOTES

¶6. (C/NF) Faiq Mohammad Ahamed: Secretary General, Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party (KDSP); received primary and secondary education in Halabja; received Bachelors Degree from Mosul University in Medicine and worked as a surgeon in a Sulaymaniyah hospital; former PUK representative to the Kurdistan National Assembly for six years. Allegedly arrested and held by PUK security forces in May, 2006, for denouncing the killing of Kurdish people in Turkey.

¶7. (C) Shukrallah Hamed Amin: Secretary General, Kurdistan Democratic Movement (KDM); born in the village of Koysinjak in Erbil; former member of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP); following the 1991 uprising, a founding member of the Kurdistan

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Communist Party (KCP); left the KCP due to ideological and management issues.

¶8. (C) Khadr Qadir Khadr: Secretary General, Kurdistan Peoples' Democratic Movement (KPDM, founded 1995); born in Erbil, 1947; joined the ICP circa 1986; did not finish high school due to ICP responsibilities, where he was commander of ICP Peshmerga and appointed as a senior member of the ICP Erbil office.

¶9. (C) Omer Hassan Omer: Chief Executive, Kurdistan Liberation Party (KLP, founded August 15, 1993); born in Erbil, 1963; did not finish studies for economic and political reasons; maintains a socialist ideology, is strongly pro-Kurdistan independence, and favors a referendum to decide Kurdistan's political future; KLP originally belonged to the KPDM, but broke from this party after some members voted to join the KDP; KLP currently publishes a weekly newspaper and magazine.

(U) COMMENT

¶10. (C) The party size of the individual bloc parties appears limited to between 1000 to 2000 members, which would severely limit their ability to compete with the two main parties dominating the KNA. However, the bloc members seem to realize this and might be setting their eyes on capturing the few seats that would tip the balance to one or the other main party in an evenly split KNA, thus permitting the opposition bloc parties to influence PUK and KDP debate on key Kurdish issues.

(U) NOTE

¶11. (C/NF) This meeting took place before post knew of the USG policy to avoid meeting with KDSP.

